



YELLOWSTONE & GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARKS WINTER USE PLANNING

Parks Seek Public Comment on New Winter Use Proposal *New plan would provide for limited, guided snowmobile and snowcoach travel*

Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks are seeking public comment on a new plan to guide the management of winter use in the parks.

The previous plan was rejected by a federal judge in Washington, D.C., in September. Neither snowmobiles nor snowcoaches can be allowed in the parks this winter without a new plan and new regulation.

The preferred alternative would allow up to 318 commercially guided, Best Available Technology (BAT) snowmobiles and up to 78 commercially guided snowcoaches per day in Yellowstone. The 2008-2009 winter season is scheduled to begin Monday, December 15, 2008.

The preferred alternative would also provide for motorized oversnow travel over Sylvan Pass and Yellowstone's East Entrance road as agreed to by the Sylvan Pass Study Group this past summer.

The daily snowmobile limit is slightly above last winter's average of 294 snowmobiles a day. It is well below the 720 a day allowed the past four winters and lower than the 540 snowmobiles a day that would have been allowed this winter under the plan rejected by the court. The daily snowcoach limit is the same as allowed during the past four years.

In Grand Teton and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway, grooming and motorized oversnow travel on the Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail (CDST) between Moran Junction and Flagg Ranch would be discontinued. However, those interested in through travel on the CDST could transport their snowmobiles on trailers between these locations.

Twenty-five snowmobiles a day would be allowed to travel on the Grassy Lake Road, with no BAT or guiding requirement. Twenty-five unguided, BAT snowmobiles a day would also be allowed on Jackson Lake to facilitate ice fishing by those possessing appropriate fishing gear and a valid State of Wyoming fishing license.

The plan would be in effect for a period of up to three winters for Yellowstone. It would provide long-term direction for winter use management in Grand Teton and the Parkway.

Park managers believe an approach including both snowmobile and snowcoach access reduces impacts of both to acceptable levels. This environmental assessment addresses the impact concerns raised by the recent ruling of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

The Winter Use Plans Environmental Assessment (EA) and an electronic form to submit comments on the Internet can be found on the web at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. Written comments may be submitted through this website, in person, or by mail. Comments will not be accepted by phone, fax, or email. All public comments on the EA must be received or postmarked by midnight, November 17, 2008.



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A proposed rule to implement the preferred alternative contained in the new plan will be published in a few days in the Federal Register and will also be open for a 15-day public review and comment period. The rulemaking process supports, but is separate from, the public review and comment period on the EA. The proposed rule and an electronic form to submit written comments will be available on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov>. You can find the proposed rule by searching the “Documents Open For Public Comment” and selecting the National Park Service as the agency.

Once comments are analyzed, the National Park Service will make a decision on the proposed plan. If the preferred alternative is selected, the Director of the Intermountain Region of the National Park Service would sign a Finding of No Significant Action (FONSI) containing details of his decision.

A final rule would have to be prepared and published in the Federal Register in order to implement the FONSI and provide for motorized oversnow vehicle travel in the parks this winter. The National Park Service expects to have a decision regarding winter use management prior to the December 15, 2008, scheduled start to the winter season.

Both the EA and the proposed rule are available on CD or in hard copy by writing the National Park Service, Management Assistant’s Office, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190. Document requests may also be made by sending an email to yell_winter_use@nps.gov; by calling (307) 344-2019 during normal business hours; or by sending a request by fax to (307) 344-2025. Also, if you would like to have your name and address removed from the winter use mailing list or added to the email list, please use the same contact information.

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